Why, and when to report skin tears

The purpose of patient incident reporting is to improve the safety and quality of care. Incident data will help services to monitor patterns of incidents and plan improvements.

It is a requirement of the SA Health Patient Incident Management and Open Disclosure Policy Directive to report incidents and near misses within 24 hours.

All skin tears should be reported to the Safety Learning System (SLS) as soon as practicable by the staff member who discovered the skin tear.

Skin tears can have serious and long term consequences for patients with frail skin and poor healing.

It is important to note that skin tears are a result of quick trauma to skin, compared with the slower development of a pressure injury.

How to report skin tears into SLS

1. **Subject of incident**
   Select ‘Incident affecting patient’.

2. **Person Affected**
   Use this section to record the location of the skin tear and treatment required, and if the one patient has more than one skin tear.
   > Under ‘Type’, select patient/consumer/client and complete details.
   > For the question ‘Was this person harmed in the incident?’ respond yes, because a skin tear is harmful.
   > The ‘Harm/Injury details’ section will appear. From the drop down lists select:
     - the harm/injury (skin tear)
     - the body part affected
     - the treatment required.
   > Then click ‘Add another injury’ to record details of other skin tear(s). Select appropriate treatment option from drop down menu.

3. **Description of the Incident/Hazard/Event**
   Write a brief description of the incident, without and names or opinions.

4. **Open disclosure**
   For the question ‘Has this incident been disclosed to patient/family?’ indicate yes if you, or a team member, has discussed the skin tear(s) with the family and carer/family.
   > This discussion should include expressing regret that this has occurred, providing information about what will happen next and answering any questions they may have.
   > If there is any comment about how this discussion went, eg family angry or upset you can inform your line manager and include this information in the section above ‘What was the outcome of the incident’
5. Incident classification

There are four (4) ways to report a skin tear depending on how it occurred (i, ii, iii, and iv below). If you do not know how the skin tear occurred, please use the final option.

i. Skin tears resulting from a collision or external force applied by an object or person. Examples include:
   - contact with wheelchair footplate during a transfer
   - skin tear from gripping, contact with fingernails during manual handling.

![Incident Classification](image)

ii. Skin tears occurring as an unintended outcome of treatment. An example is tearing of skin when removing dressings.

![Incident Classification](image)

iii. As part of a patient fall, a skin tear can occur.

For example if the person hit their arm on a chair as they fell, or hit their head on the bed or floor. These should be reported as a patient fall and the skin tear recorded in the ‘Harm/Injury details’ section (see 2).

iv. Skin tears occurring as a result of another type of accident. An example is where the water jug fell off the overway table and injured the patient's arm.

**NB** Use this option if you do not know how the skin tear occurred and the patient is not able to tell you. Select ‘Accident of some other type or cause’ as indicated in screen shot below.

![Incident Classification](image)

*continued*
6. **Safety Assessment Code (SAC) rating**

No skin tear is ‘insignificant’ in consequence or outcome. Therefore, the consequence will range from minor to major. It could be extreme if death directly results eg from septicaemia, or if the patient's length of stay is increased as a direct result by >125 days.

For further information refer to the SAC matrix by clicking on the link.

7. **Final steps**

Once the form is complete, click submit.

A message stating the incident number, and that it has been saved will appear. You will need to note this information if you would like to follow up with the relevant manager as to its progress.

Further information is available on the Patient incident management in Safety Learning System webpage.